



Federal Flyer

June 25, 1999

A Publication of the Legislative Affairs Office

Vol. V, No. 9

House Passes FY 2000 Transportation Bill Senate Version Faces Filibuster, TEA 21 Formula Amendments

The U.S. House of Representatives this week voted 429-3 to overwhelmingly approve H.R. 2084, its Fiscal Year 2000 spending legislation for the U.S. Department of Transportation and Related Agencies. The bill met little resistance as it moved through the House; however, passage of a similar measure in the Senate is likely to be more difficult.

House Action on H.R. 2084. The House bill provides increased funding for highways, transit, traffic safety, Coast Guard, Amtrak, and aviation programs. The measure follows TEA 21 for increased highway and transit spending.

The only area of conflict on the House floor during debate of H.R. 2084 involved discussions about how the House will reduce spending to meet the overall budget agreement limits. **House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bill Young** (R – FL) amended the measure to eliminate \$300 million in unobligated balances in the FAA Airport Improvement Program. Despite the House's recent action to increase future spending for aviation programs, **House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bud Shuster** (R – PA) agreed to the amendment because it only cut funding that wouldn't be used anyway. The bill retains the \$2.25 billion funding level for the AIP for FY 2000.

Another effort to reduce the bill's overall spending level came as the result of two points of order. The first, by Shuster, removed language that required that all FAA operating costs come from the Aviation Trust Fund. Shuster claimed that the offending language was contrary to the House's action last week on AIR 21 (H.R. 1000), the FAA reauthorization legislation, which provides for at least 30% of the FAA operating costs to be covered by General Fund dollars. The second, by Oklahoma Republican **Tom Coburn**, had the effect of striking the FAA operating funds altogether, amounting to a \$6 billion cut in the bill's overall funding level.

The appropriators conceded both points of order, and the language was struck from the bill. All parties expect the House and Senate to reinstate at least part of the FAA operating funds in the conference committee on the measure later this summer.

Senate Bill Faces Filibuster and Possibly Damaging Amendments. The Senate's FY 2000 transportation spending bill (S. 1143) may not sail as smoothly. While the bill generally provides the same increases in funding for transportation programs as the House measure, the Senate bill contains a controversial provision that affects the distribution of transit funding among the states. It is this provision which New York and California senators strongly oppose.

Section 321 of the Senate bill provides that no state shall receive more than 12.5% of the transit formula and capital investment funds in FY 2000. Both New York and California exceed this proposed cap. If enacted, the cap would result in both states losing hundreds of millions of transit dollars. Under the provision, any funds above the limit would be redistributed to the remaining states.

New York and California senators are preparing as many as 200 amendments if the measure comes to the floor with this section included. Several would also alter the state-by-state allocation of highway funds established by TEA 21. If those formulas are reopened for debate, other senators may attack the TEA 21 firewalls that protect TEA 21's guaranteed funding for highways and transit programs.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R – MS) has filed a cloture motion on behalf of **Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby** (R – AL). The cloture motion, if agreed to, would end any filibuster and direct the Senate to proceed to consideration of the transportation spending bill. Monday's cloture vote will determine if the measure moves forward next week.

The *Federal Flyer* is a publication of the TxDOT Legislative Affairs Office. It is intended to provide up-to-date information on major legislative activities in the 106th Congress for the management of the Texas Department of Transportation, state leaders, and others interested in Texas transportation issues. This report will also feature key activities in the national transportation community. Sources include news services and staff reports.

Coby Chase, Director of Legislative Affairs, serves as publisher and can be reached at (512) 463-6086. The department's federal legislative analysts are Tonia Norman Ramirez (463-9957) and David Soileau (463-6081). Please contact any of the staff for information on federal transportation and legislative issues.

This publication will be filed with the State Publications Clearinghouse in the State Library in accordance with the Texas State Depository Law.